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AN OUTSTANDING SOVIET ARMAMENTS DESIGNER

V. Lyutyy

Vasily Alekseyevich Degtyarev, outstanding Soviet inventor and arms designer, was born in Tula in 1880. His family were armorers, and when he was 11 years old he went to work in the Tula Arms Plant.

Called into military service: in 1901, he was assigned to the Officers' Rifle School in Oranienbaum; he later served as a machinist at the firing range, where many types of arms, particularly foreign makes, were tested. There he met Vladimir Alexandrovich Fedorov, then a Guards Captain, who was making a new automatic weapon, and was assigned to Fedorov as a gunsmith. In 1908, Degtyarev was sent to the Sestroretskiy Arms and Plant to produce Fedorov's automatic weapon. F. V. Tokaev, the well-known Russian inventor, worked with them on the project. The Soviet automatic rifle was completed in 1916.

Degtyarev learned much about foreign arms during the Intervention and October Revolution and decided to create a simple, lightweight, all-purpose machine gun. He worked for 4 years on the experimental model, and in the fall of 1926, the new weapon was tested against Dreyse and Maxim submachine guns which had been constructed and improved by Sokolov. Degtyarev's machine gun, the DP (Degtyarev infantry), was far superior to the German and French models.

Degtyarev designed not only the DP, but later produced other variations of his machine gun, including the DA (Degtyarev aviation), and in 1929, the DT (Degtyarev tank). Later, he designed the DK (Degtyarev large caliber), and another heavy machine gun with G. S. Shpagin in 1938, the 12.7-millimeter DShK. The PPD (Degtyarev machine pistol) played an important role in World War II. In 1941, Degtyarev completed the PPD-41 (Degtyarev antitank rifle).

As a result of his service, Degtyarev was made a permanent deputy to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, was awarded the title of Hero of Socialist Labor and the academic degree of Doctor of Technical Sciences in 1940, and later received a Stalin prize for his inventions.

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